

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU, US
SUBJECT: TIMES ARTICLE ON US-TURKISH RELATIONS

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF ARTICLE BY MARIO MODIANO ON
FEATURE PAGE OF LONDON TIMES OF APRIL 27 ENTITLED,
"WILL TURKEY'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE PERSUADE CONGRESS TO
LIFT THE ARMS EMBARGO?".

2. BEGIN TEXT: THE AMERICAN ARMS EMBARGO IMPOSED ON
TURKEY IN THE WAKE OF THE CYPRUS INVASION MORE THAN TWO
YEARS AGO, HAS IMPAIRED THE COUNTRY'S MILITARY EFFECTIVE-
NESS TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT THE TURKS ARE DETERMINED TO
REVISE THEIR DEFENSE POLICIES. WHATEVER THE RESULTS OF
NEXT JUNE'S GENERAL ELECTION.
ALTHOUGH TURKISH LEADERS REFUSE TO ADMIT IT. THEY
REALIZE THAT TODAY THERE IS NO PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO
THEIR COUNTRY'S MILITARY DEPENDENCE ON THE UNITED STATES.
THEY FIND THIS SO INTOLERABLE THAT THEY THREATEN TO MAKE
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THEIR DEFENSE COMMITMENT TO THE WEST PROPORTIONAL TO THE
MILITARY AID RECEIVED.
HOW SEVERELY THE TURKISH MILITARY MACHINE WAS HURT BY
THE AMERICAN ARMS EMBARGO WAS REVEALED BY GENERAL
ALEXANDER HAIG. THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER IN EUROPE,
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON MARCH 1. HE SAID THAT THE TURKISH AIR FORCE "IS

TODAY OPERATING AT AN EFFICIENCY OF LESS THAN 50 PERCENT OF ITS FORMER CAPABILITY."

A KNOWLEDGEABLE AMERICAN SOURCE SAID: "AT ONE POINT THE EMBARGO WAS ALMOST OBSCENE. THEY COULD NOT FLY A PLANE BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT GET A \$3-CARTRIDGE FOR THE SEAT-EJECTOR. THEY ARE NOW STILL RECEIVING ONE-HALF OF WHAT THEY NEED."

TURKEY HAS BEEN RECEIVING ABOUT \$125M WORTH OF CREDITS A YEAR FOR MILITARY PURPOSES IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT SHE IS NOT ALLOWED TO BUY UNITED STATES ARMS OR SPARES, EVEN ON A STRAIGHT CASH BASIS, BECAUSE OF THE EMBARGO. IN ANY CASE THE COUNTRY'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE POSITION IS SO WEAK TO ALLOW IT TO DO THAT OR LOOK FOR ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF SUPPLY. AS A RESULT "SCROUNGING" IS WIDELY PRACTICED IN THE ARMED FORCES. IT WAS IN ORDER TO REMEDY THIS SITUATION THAT THE UNITED STATES-TURKISH DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT (DCA) WAS CONCLUDED IN WASHINGTON JUST OVER 13 MONTHS AGO. BUT ITS RATIFICATION, WHICH WOULD HAVE TERMINATED THE NOW PARTIAL EMBARQO, WAS DELAYED BY THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND HELD UP BY CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION. HOWEVER, AS ONE HIGHLY-PLACED OFFICIAL IN ANKARA PUT IT: "FROM THE MOMENT (PRESIDENT) CARTER TOOK OVER, THE CLOCK STARTED TICKING AWAY."

THE TURKISH LEADERS REGARD THE CHANGEOVER IN THE WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATION WITH PROFOUND MISTRUST. THEY WERE ANNOYED BY PRESIDENT CARTER'S DECISION TO SEND THE CLIFFORD MISSION ON A FACT-FINDING TOUR TO HELP HIM REASSESS UNITED STATES POLICY IN THIS REGION. THEY NOW

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KNOW THAT, AS A RESULT OF THE CLIFFORD REPORT, PRESIDENT CARTER, THOUGH HE IS WILLING TO SUPPORT THE TOTAL LIFTING OF THE EMBARGO, WILL NOT ASK CONGRESS TO RATIFY THE DCA UNTIL TURKEY, AS PROMISED TO MR. CLIFFORD, MAKES SUBSTANTIAL STEPS TOWARDS A CYPRUS SETTLEMENT, AFTER THE TURKISH ELECTION.

UNTIL THEN THE PRESIDENT PROPOSES TO INCREASE UNITED STATES MILITARY AID CREDITS TO TURKEY TO ABOUT \$225M, WHICH IS ALMOST THE ANNUAL SUM OF AID PLACED UNDER THE DCA. IN THIS WAY TURKEY WOULD NOT APPEAR TO BE TAKING ACTION ON CYPRUS UNDER PRESSURE, WHILE THE MOVE COULD ALSO BOLSTER PREMIER DEMIREL'S ELECTORAL CHANCES. IT IS STILL UNCERTAIN HOW CONGRESS WILL REACT TO THIS COMPROMISE.

THE LINK BETWEEN THE RATIFICATION OF THE DCA AND CYPRUS IRRITATES THE TURKISH LEADERS. MR. IHSAN SABRI CAGLAYANGIL, THE TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTER, TOLD ME: "IT WOULD BE THE WRONG APPROACH FOR CONGRESS TO JUDGE THE BILATERAL RELATIONS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES IN THE CONTEXT OF

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CYPRUS SITUATION. IN FACT, THIS

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APPROACH HAS ALREADY PROVED TO BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE." TURKISH OFFICIALS ARGUE THAT THE EMBARGO. MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, CONTRIBUTED TO THE CYPRUS DEADLOCK, BECAUSE TURKEY IS FAR TOO PROUD TO BE SEEN YIELDING UNDER PRESSURE. THE GREEKS INSIST THAT TURKEY WAS COMPELLED TO MAKE THE PRESENT OVERTURES IN CYPRUS UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE EMBARGO AND IN THE HOPE OF INDUCING THE UNITED STATES TO RESCIND IT. WESTERN DIPLOMATS IN ANKARA SAY THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE TURKISH MILITARY, WHO HAVE TO LIVE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARMS EMBARGO, HAVE ALREADY MADE IT CLEAR TO THE POLITICIANS THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE TURKEY'S MILITARY COMMITMENT IN CYPRUS REDUCED. MORE THAN THAT THE TURKISH LEADERSHIP CAN NOW COUNT ON THE SUPPORT OF THE MAIN OPPOSITION PARTY IN CASE THE PROBLEM OF CYPRUS IS SOLVED ALONG THE LINES NOW UNDER DISCUSSION. A CRUCIAL QUESTION IS WHETHER THE UNITED STATES WILL

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WANT TO USE ITS INFLUENCE ALSO TO INDUCE A SETTLEMENT OF GREEK-TURKISH DISPUTES IN THE AEGEAN THAT ARE POTENTIALLY MORE EXPLOSIVE THAN CYPRUS. "NATO COHESION COMES FIRST. THEREFORE ALL THE PROBLEMS ARE TAKEN TOGETHER. IT IS RIDICULOUS TO ALLOW LESSER ISSUES TO CONTROL THE MAJOR ONE OF WESTERN DEFENSE." BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT THE AEGEAN WILL TAKE LONG TO RESOLVE WHEREAS THE DECISION ON THE ARMS EMBARGO WILL BECOME MORE URGENT IN VIEW OF EARLY ELECTIONS IN TURKEY.

IN THE OPINION OF WESTERN OBSERVERS IF THE DCA IS NOT APPROVED BY CONGRESS, THE AMERICAN BASES IN TURKEY WILL BE SHUT AND THE PERSONNEL DISMISSED. THEY POINT OUT THAT EVEN IF THE AMERICANS HAVE DEVELOPED ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INTELLIGENCE, THEY CAN HARDLY BE EFFECTIVE SUBSTITUTES TO "BASES SITTING PRACTICALLY ON THE DOORSTEP OF THE SOVIET UNION."

BUT THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT LEADERS MAINTAIN THAT, EVEN IF THE DCA IS APPROVED, RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN. THEY INDICATE THAT TURKEY'S DEFENSE RELATIONS WILL BE REVISED SO THAT THE COUNTRY'S CONTRIBUTION TO NATO SHOULD BE IN PROPORTION TO HER DOMESTIC FINANCIAL CAPABILITIES AND THE LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE RECEIVED FROM THE WEST.

THE REVISION WOULD ALSO INVOLVE THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF A DOMESTIC ARMS INDUSTRY TO REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN SOURCES OF SUPPLY. ABOVE ALL, THEY ADD, IT WOULD INVOLVE A DRASTIC IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH THE COUNTRIES ON TURKEY'S PERIPHERY TO ESTABLISH FRONTS OF PEACE AND DIMINISH THE RISKS OF CONFLICT. MR. CAGLAYANGIL'S RECENT VISIT TO MOSCOW AND THE PLAN TO SIGN A "FRIENDSHIP DOCUMENT" BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, ARE POINTERS IN THAT DIRECTION.

MOST NATO OBSERVERS IN ANKARA AGREE THAT IN THE LONG TERM, TURKEY, A COUNTRY WITH A SIX-BILLION-DOLLAR ALL-AMERICAN MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE, HAS NO PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TODAY TO ITS LINK WITH THE UNITED STATES, EVEN

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IF THE DCA IS REJECTED. THESE OBSERVERS, HOWEVER, DIFFER ON THE NATURE OF TURKEY'S SHORT-TERM REACTIONS TO A REJECTION.

"TURKEY'S WESTERN ORIENTATION IS NOT EMOTIONAL", ONE WESTERN DIPLOMAT TOLD ME. "IT SPRINGS FROM THE PRACTICAL AWARENESS OF WHERE THE COUNTRY'S REAL INTEREST LIES. NO SERIOUS POLITICIAN HERE BELIEVES IN THE POSSIBILITY OF SUBSTITUTING RUSSIA FOR THE UNITED STATES OR TAKING SOVIET

ARMS."

ANOTHER QUALIFIED WESTERN OBSERVER SUGGESTED THAT

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TURKEY MIGHT, IN A SHORT-TERM OUTBURST FOR THE REJECTION
OF THE DCA, LEAVE THE WEST, GO NEUTRAL, TURN TO THE
ARABS, OR EVEN COURT MOSCOW. "THEY CAN DO UNEXPECTED
THINGS, LIKE CUT THE NOSE TO SPITE THE FACE, ESPECIALLY
IN A PRE-ELECTION PERIOD. THE FEELING WOULD BE ONE OF
BEING LET DOWN BY THE WEST WHICH IS PRO-GREEK. SO THEY
MIGHT AS WELL TURN BACK TO ISLAM OR ANYONE ELSE."
THIS WOULD HURT THE WEST, THIS SOURCE EXPLAINED, BE-
CAUSE "TURKEY HAS THE BIGGEST ARMY IN NATO AFTER THE
AMERICANS, SITTING RIGHT ON THE SOVIET BORDER AND CON-
TROLLING A VITAL GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION. THE UNITED
STATES CONTRIBUTES THE BASES IN THIS AREA AND THE MIQHT
OF THE SIXTH FLEET. THIS CREATES AN ENTITY THAT IS A
MAJOR ELEMENT IN THE WORLD STRATEGIC BALANCE. AND
THERE IS NO WAY TO AVOID TAKING THIS INTO ACCOUNT."
THE TURKISH LEADERS APPRECIATE THIS LINE OF THOUGHT
WHICH TALLIES WITH THEIR OWN ASSESSMENT OF TURKEY'S VALUE
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TO THE WEST. THEIR MAIN CONCERN NOW IS TO CONVINCE
WASHINGTON'S CONGRESSIONAL SKEPTICS WHOSE PRICE FOR
ACKNOWLEDGING THIS ROLE FOR TURKEY IS HER SUBSTANTIAL
CONTRIBUTION TO THE ELIMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF FRICTION
THAT UNDERMINE NATO UNITY IN THIS REGION. END TEXT

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